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## Two Good Choices for Defense Committees

By George J. Hochbrueckner

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The appointment of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton to the Senate Armed Services Committee and Rep. Steve Israel to the House Armed Services Committee is great news for the defense and homeland security provider companies of Long Island and New York.

This is the first time in history that New York has had a U.S. Senator and Long Island House member on both committees simultaneously. As a former member of Congress who served on the House committee from 1987 to 1995, I understand and appreciate the many opportunities that accompany their appointment to these vital and prestigious committees.

In the upcoming federal fiscal year 2004, which begins Oct. 1, 2003, the defense budget will likely consume about \$380 billion of the probable \$2.2 trillion of the federal budget. And with President George W. Bush's current direction and stated goals on defense, as well as the emphasis on improving homeland security, these funding levels will continue to increase into the future.

One has to understand the mechanism of the federal spending system to appreciate the great impact that accompanies these committee assignments. While all 100 senators and 435 House members vote on the defense budget, the members of the two armed services committees are the key players who shape it. Working together, Clinton and Israel will have more than a double impact.

The president traditionally sends his defense budget request on behalf of the Pentagon to the House and Senate in February. There are thousands of defense programs and many associated issues. The Senate and House committee members conduct hearings, appropriately eliminate, modify and add new programs and, it is hoped, provide the final defense bill for the presidential signature by Oct. 1. Historically, the Pentagon will get most of its request, but the congressional committees will have a major impact on the final programs and the dollars spent on them.

In my experience working with Hillary Clinton and Steve Israel, I am confident of their ability to serve our defense needs well. In my 18 years in elected office, I have found that there are "show horses" and there are "workhorses." The "show horses" talk big and do little. The "workhorses" get the job done. These two individuals are "workhorses." They have clearly demonstrated their ability to study, understand and act to solve national and New York problems. I believe friend and foe alike agree that they are concerned about New York and its people, are smart, do their homework and work hard.

In Hillary Clinton's case, I am reminded of a meeting she held on the health-care issue



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when she was given the task by President Bill Clinton of developing a national health-care plan in the 1993-94 time frame. I was one of 30 members of Congress invited by her to the White House to discuss her plan before it went public. Many of the members of Congress were quite senior with extensive knowledge in the health-care field. What impressed me the most during this 90-minute meeting was her depth of knowledge on the subject. There was not one argument or question that she could not answer. She will bring this same inquisitive nature and attention to detail to the defense scene.

As a member of the Huntington Town Board, Steve Israel was known for his ability to get the job done. In his first term in Congress, Israel (D-Dix Hills) recognized the importance of the defense industry to our economy and, although he did not initially serve on the House Armed Services Committee, he has already visited many of the defense companies on Long Island. Clearly, he will hit the ground running with this new assignment in his second term.

Will Clinton and Israel support every New York defense program request? I hope not. Will they support every New York program that is good for our national defense and supports our service members? I am confident they will.

In my 20-year engineering career and 18 years in elected office, I have learned first hand of the tremendous technical talent and capabilities that reside in our state. New York has a treasure trove of smart people, great ideas and innovative companies. My advice to our New York defense and homeland security companies is: Call Clinton's and Israel's offices, present your company and your products, and give them the opportunity to help.

With Clinton's and Israel's demonstrated intelligence, work ethic and ability to work not only together but with their Republican colleagues, their appointment to the Armed Services committees is a "win-win" situation and a historic event for Long Island and New York.

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